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Chairman:	Mr. KALPAGE	(Sri Lanka)
later:	Mr. SENGWE (Vice-Chairman)	(Zimbabwe)
later:	Mr. KALPAGE (Chairman)	(Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 86: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued) (A/48/96, A/48/117-S/25428, A/48/140-S/25597, A/48/205-S/25923, A/48/209-S/25937, A/48/253-S/26045, A/48/263-S/26078, A/48/278, A/48/284-S/26191, A/48/287-S/26201, A/48/379-S/26411, A/48/410-S/26465, A/48/415-S/26473, A/48/537-A/48/543 and A/48/557)

1. Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) referred to the twenty-fifth report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/48/557). As in previous years, the report provided an impartial description of the human rights situation in the occupied Arab territories based on the testimony of persons having knowledge or first-hand experience of the human rights situation in those territories and on information published in the Israeli press.

2. Since one member of the Committee was unable to participate in its debates, as a result of General Assembly resolution 47/1, the ability of the Special Committee to work actively had been diminished. He, therefore, reiterated the importance of resolving that problem so that the Committee might continue to fulfil its responsibilities as effectively as possible.

3. The report of the Special Committee presented a composite picture of the situation in the occupied Arab territories as it affected the human rights of the civilian population. The occupation itself had produced a situation in which violation of human rights was inevitable. Moreover, the critical human rights situation in those territories had increasingly deteriorated as a result of the severe repression of the intifadah which had begun about six years earlier. The violence, as well as the climate of frustration and fear in the Arab territories, stemmed from the illegal policies of annexation and settlement pursued by the Israeli occupying authorities since 1967 and from the violations of the human rights of the Arab population. The report reaffirmed that the physical and psychological stress endured by the population of the territories had been compounded by the harshness of the policies of the Israeli authorities during the period under review. Many of the repressive measures had affected all walks of life in the territories and had created a situation which continued to jeopardize international peace and security.

4. During the period under review, the Israeli authorities had adopted a series of unprecedented repressive measures. At the end of 1992, they had started to carry out a new form of collective punishment, consisting of the destruction of entire neighbourhoods with heavy artillery fire to facilitate searches for wanted persons. A number of such operations, aimed at capturing a single fugitive, had left scores of innocent people homeless. The number of dead and injured among the Arab population in those territories, including civilians and children, had continued to increase as a result of the disproportionately violent and harsh methods employed by the Israeli occupying authorities to repress the intifadah.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

5. As indicated in the report, the administration of justice in the occupied territories was characterized by a lack of due process and absence of basic safeguards for the Arab population. The sentences applied to that population for acts they had allegedly committed were disproportionately harsh, whereas the Israeli authorities benefited from complete leniency, even when accused of murdering an Arab civilian.

6. The report noted that the Israeli authorities had closed the roads leading to the occupied Arab territories, resulting in great hardships for the Arab population. As a result of those arbitrary measures, access to Muslim and Christian holy sites had been restricted. In addition, the practice of torture and ill-treatment during interrogation and even after sentencing had continued. In some cases, physicians had been required to examine prisoners in order to determine whether they were physically fit for certain types of interrogation.

7. The report of the Special Committee and the evaluation of arbitrary practices of the Israeli occupying authorities made it clear that Israel had refused to co-operate with the Special Committee, despite the fact that the Committee had tried many times, since its establishment in 1968, to obtain such cooperation.

8. The Arab population of the Golan continued to suffer from different forms of persecution and repression carried out by the Israeli authorities. Since 1967, it had been continuously subjected to emergency laws, unjust measures, such as arbitrary imprisonment, and almost total domination by the military chief of the occupied Syrian Golan. The military commander was authorized to impose curfews whenever he deemed them necessary and to place anyone under house arrest. Other excessive measures, such as beating of demonstrators, attacks on houses and schools, arrests for trivial reasons, were also used. On 17 April 1993, during the celebration of Syrian independence day in the Golan, the Israeli authorities had arrested seven citizens participating in the festivities. It should be recalled, in that context, that the authorities continued to conscript Arab youths from the occupied Syrian Golan and to incorporate them into the ranks of the occupying authorities of their territory.

9. As for Israeli practices regarding land management and water supply in the Syrian Golan and other occupied territories, it was clear from the relevant reports of the Secretary-General that those practices were still part of the settlement policy. The Israeli authorities were applying the policy as a way of dominating the territories in order to support the Israeli economy and establish an integrated agricultural and industrial base linked to that economy. The reports clearly indicated that an Israeli company had assumed responsibility for all well-drilling activities in the occupied Arab territories and that the citizens of the Syrian Golan were required to request authorization to obtain water and even to collect rainwater. Some inhabitants of the Syrian Golan had been forced to destroy their water stores; other stores had been demolished by the Israeli authorities, who had also taken over a lake which was the occupied territories' main water body, resulting in a serious shortage of drinking water and water for irrigation in the Golan. In addition, the lake waters had been diverted to the Israeli settlements to meet the settlers' needs. According to

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

reports, there were 44 Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan. In addition to taking possession of lands and water resources in the occupied territory, the Israeli authorities had continued their practice of uprooting olive and fruit trees, thus depriving the farmers of their main source of income and forcing them to abandon their lands. To justify that practice, the Israelis had alleged security concerns.

10. The occupying authorities had destroyed about 240 human settlements since the region had been occupied, following the aggression of June 1967, and approximately 120,000 inhabitants of those settlements had been expelled. It was no longer possible to determine where those Arab villages had been located since they had been deliberately destroyed and since many of them had been turned over to agricultural or other uses.

11. Following the 1967 aggression, the Israeli authorities had carried out an archaeological study of the region and had falsified some of the artifacts they had found, in an attempt to provide historical evidence of their ties to the region currently under occupation. He (Mr. Shaheed) wished to state for the record that his country reaffirmed its right to take back the property which was part of its cultural heritage and which the Israeli occupying authorities, in violation of international law, had confiscated and registered as belonging to their archaeological heritage.

12. He pointed out that six Arab populations continued to live under Israeli occupation. Their education programmes had been replaced by Israeli programmes under which Arab students were obliged to study Hebrew and Hebrew history as a basic subject. The purpose of imposing a programme of Hebrew studies in the Syrian Golan was to weaken the identity of the Golan's Arab population and to falsify geographic and historical facts about the region. To that end, the Israeli authorities had replaced the names of some parts of the Golan with Hebrew names so that young people would believe that the Golan belonged to Israel; imposed Hebrew history and diminished the importance of Arab history; modified the curriculum in the schools; closed teaching institutions and prohibited the use of Arab texts. In addition, Syrian teachers had been dismissed and had been replaced by Israeli teachers who were not sufficiently qualified.

13. The Arabs in the Syrian Golan were faced with serious problems owing to the Israeli authorities' lack of interest in their health conditions. When attempts had been made to improve the situation, those authorities had responded with sanctions. The Israeli occupation authorities, in particular the military, had been carrying out activities with serious consequences for the environment in the territory of Syrian Golan. The excessive use of pesticides and other chemical products had also had negative effects on the environment.

14. The Israeli occupation authorities were applying an overly harsh fiscal policy to the Syrian Arabs, since the taxes were way above the income of that population. Moreover, the imposition of eight types of taxes was not justified as the population received almost no services from those authorities.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

15. The year 1993 was the eleventh anniversary of the uprising in the Golan, which had begun on 14 February 1982 and had lasted five months. Yet, in reality, the Arabs in the Golan had not given up their struggle against the Israelis. It was worth mentioning that, at its forty-ninth session, the Commission on Human Rights, had adopted resolution 1993/1, of 19 February 1993, on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan, in which it had strongly condemned the occupying Israeli authorities for their refusal to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, particularly resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council had decided, inter alia, that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect, and had demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, should rescind forthwith its decision. The Commission had also condemned the persistence of Israel in changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan, and had emphasized that the displaced persons of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan must be allowed to return to their homes and to recover their property. It had determined that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel for the purpose previously mentioned were null and void, constituted a flagrant violation of international law and of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and had no legal effect. Furthermore, it had strongly condemned Israel for its attempts to impose forcibly Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan and for its practices of annexation, establishment of settlements, confiscation of lands, diversion of water resources and imposing a boycott on their agricultural products; and had called upon Israel to desist from its settlement designs and policies aimed against academic institutions with the goal of distorting the historical facts and serving the objectives of occupation, and to desist from its repressive measures against the population of the Syrian Golan; the Commission had called upon Member States not to recognize any of the legislative or administrative measures referred to in the resolution. In addition, it had decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fiftieth session, as a matter of high priority, the item concerning the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories.

16. After reviewing the evidence, the Special Committee had concluded, in its report (A/48/557), that the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Arabs in the occupied territories was serious and had expressed its concern in that respect, since there were continuing violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, considered as the principal human rights instrument applicable to the situation in the occupied Arab territories. The Special Committee had also concluded that the circumstances confronting the Palestinians and other Arabs, their low standard of living and the climate of violence prevailing in their territories continued to be a threat to international peace and security. To halt the deterioration of the situation in those territories and to mitigate the feelings of desperation prevailing there, the international community must intensify its efforts to convince the occupying Israeli authorities to put an end to practices which violated the rights of the population in those territories and to adopt immediately measures which would effectively guarantee the rights and fundamental freedoms of that population.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

17. Israel must respect fully the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, given that the Security Council, the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies had reiterated that the provisions of that Convention were applicable to the situation in the occupied Arab territories. In addition, the international community must renew its efforts to secure access for the Special Committee, as the principal body established by the General Assembly to protect the human rights of the population in the occupied territories, to the occupied Arab territory so that it could carry out its mandate effectively.

18. His country was fully committed to the land-for-peace initiative. If Israel truly wanted peace, it should accept that initiative and withdraw from the occupied territories. In his view, there could be neither peace nor prosperity in the Middle East while the occupation, arrogance and denial of the rights of others persisted. Peace was tied to respect for United Nations resolutions and the norms of justice. It was not a matter of concluding agreements with one Arab population and then reaching settlements with the others later. Only a total withdrawal could lead to total peace.

19. Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe) took the Chair.

20. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that the reports of the Special Committee (A/48/557, A/48/96 and A/48/278) demonstrated that, during the year under review, the human rights situation of the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories continued to be critical (A/48/557, para. 859).

21. For the twenty-fifth year in a row, the Special Committee had concluded that the human rights situation of the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories had deteriorated, as reflected in the treatment of civilians, fundamental freedoms, administration of justice and the treatment of prisoners. Israel had continued to ignore those rights, to establish settlements in the territories, which was in itself a violation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and to implement a policy of systematic repression of Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories. In other words, Israel continued to violate the norms of international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

22. Tunisia had high hopes for the peace process begun in Madrid and welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel as an important step towards the recovery by the Palestinian people of all its rights, including the right to self-determination. Israel must adapt to the climate created by the constructive developments in the region, enter fully into the spirit of the Washington Agreement and take immediate, specific measures to indicate its change of attitude so that the goals of the Palestinian cause could be achieved and the problem of the Middle East solved.

(Mr. Abdellah, Tunisia)

23. Application of the fourth Geneva Convention, the release of Palestinian and other Arab prisoners from the territories, and the ending of exile and other forms of collective punishment were among the more urgent measures that Israel must take to create the necessary conditions to ensure the success of the Washington Agreement and bring the peace process in the region to a satisfactory conclusion.

24. Mr. RODRIGO (Sri Lanka) said that the fact that the Special Committee had had to continue its mandate for a quarter of a century underlined not only the anguish and suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation but also the imperative need to reverse that tragic situation.

25. There was a direct relationship between the human rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples and political developments in the occupied territories. The intifadah and the measures taken by Israel to suppress it had unleashed a wave of violence that had cost many lives. The fundamental basis for the Special Committee's mandate had been that the occupation was itself a violation of human rights. Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories was an essential prerequisite for an enduring peace and for the security of all States in the region, including Israel.

26. His delegation welcome the historic 1993 Declaration of Principles, which it hoped would lead to a dramatic change in attitude on the part of the Israeli Government. Sri Lanka had always considered the question of Palestine to be the crux of the Middle East problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Declaration marked the beginning of a long process, and any deterioration in the human rights situation in the occupied territories would retard, obstruct and even abort the process, strengthening the cause of the extremists.

27. While the Special Committee had endeavoured over the years to monitor the human rights situation in the occupied territories, it had not been able to visit them. Visits by the members of the Special Committee to those territories could be a way of assessing any developments subsequent to the signing of the Declaration of Principles and could promote confidence-building. As had been said with regard to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the work of the Special Committee still had a long way to go.

28. The report of the Special Committee (A/48/557) gave a detailed account of human rights violations in the occupied territories, such as the closure of the territories in March 1993, which had had harsh economic effects. It was to be hoped that the Protocol on Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation in Economic and Development Programmes would provide long-term solutions, advance the political process and yield a peace dividend.

29. The transition process would be complex, as there were still some highly sensitive issues to resolve, such as the return of refugees, the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, security and border issues and regional relations, which required an atmosphere free of suspicion in which the human factor prevailed.

30. Mr. ALZAYANI (Bahrain) said that the diplomatic and political developments generated by the Madrid Conference called for a new approach to the daily lives of the Palestinians and other Arab peoples in the occupied territories. Judging by the report, however, the conditions in the territories prior to the conclusion of the Agreement between Palestine and Israel indicated the contrary. Israel continued to pursue practices that were detrimental to the civilian population in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Syrian Arab Golan. The information contained in the report indicated that there had been a deterioration in all aspects of the life of the civilian population in the region and that the occupation authorities indiscriminately repressed the population in order to put down the intifadah of the Palestinian people. The collective punishments imposed by the occupation authorities, such as the closure of academic institutions, the demolition of houses, the imposition of curfews, the sealing off of some zones, the closure of mosques, the confiscation of land and the expansion of settlements, had exacerbated economic and social difficulties.

31. In a letter dated 27 August 1993 from the Chairman of the Special Committee addressed to the Secretary-General, the Chairman had said that the human rights situation was deteriorating as a result of measures taken to suppress the intifadah. Given that the report covered the period before the signing of the Declaration of Principles, it was to be hoped that after the signing Israeli practices would be ended, confidence-building measures would be taken and the provisions of the agreement would be implemented as soon as possible. He hoped, too, that the Palestinian people would be able to exercise its inalienable rights and that Israel would withdraw from the occupied territories, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

32. Mr. NEZDOUA (Algeria) said that the report described the tragic plight of the Palestinian people, which had been driven from its native land and deprived of its national rights. Although in recent months there had been a decided improvement in the situation in comparison with previous years, the crux of the problem remained the same: the occupation.

33. When a people had been subjected to the yoke of occupation, forced into exile, faced with serious difficulties and deprived of its right to choose its destiny freely, that constituted a violation of humanitarian law as recognized by all international conventions and a flagrant denial of human rights.

34. To the list of dead and injured, which grew daily, and the consequences of the destruction of social and economic structures must be added the losses suffered by the population of the occupied territories, such as declining physical health, arrests, persecution, imprisonment and all kinds of humiliations. The effects of the situation were particularly harmful to the growth and development of children, who were profoundly affected by the persistent brutal repression carried out by the Israeli armed forces and by the spectacle of the humiliations to which their parents were subjected. Even within Israeli society there were denunciations of the methods used by the occupation authorities, largely as a result of reports of the activities of special units whose task was to infiltrate the Arab population and identify leaders of the intifadah.

(Mr. Nezdoua, Algeria)

35. Algeria welcomed the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles by the PLO and Israel. In that connection, his delegation, which continued to be disturbed by the deterioration in the situation of the Arab population of the occupied territories, wished to associate itself with all those who hoped that that important step aimed at bringing about a just and lasting peace would quickly lead to improvements in the actual living conditions of those people.

36. Mr. LOFTI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the reports of the Special Committee, in particular document A/48/557, stressed that occupation in itself constituted a violation of human rights.

37. The human rights situation of the Palestinian people and other Arab populations in the occupied territories remained a matter of serious concern. The report described acts that violated certain fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of movement, education, religion and expression; he drew attention in that connection to paragraph 895 of document A/48/557.

38. With regard to education, the closure of teaching establishments had had adverse consequences for the occupied territories. More than 25 per cent of all students had been unable to enrol in universities or attend classes. The report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/48/13) contained similar information. The measures adopted by the occupying forces also violated the freedom of expression. According to the report, the harassment of journalists had persisted as well.

39. The occupying forces had continued to expand their settlements and confiscate land and were trying to create a new road network that would link those settlements while bypassing Palestinian towns and villages. The reports of the Commissioner-General (A/48/13) and the Special Committee (A/48/557) also described the inhuman action taken by the Israeli forces, particularly their undercover units, against the Palestinians.

40. His delegation appreciated the work done by international organizations and agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNRWA to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians and invited the international community to help the Palestinian people exercise its inalienable rights, including the right to establish an independent State covering the entire territory of Palestine.

41. Mr. CISSE (Senegal) said that although the reports of the Special Committee pointed to grave violations of human rights in the occupied territories, the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Government of Israel and the PLO in Washington on 13 September 1993 gave rise to the hope that the countries of the Middle East would soon live in peace and security, and that the legitimate aspirations of their people would be fulfilled. The signing of the Declaration opened a new era for Palestinians and Israelis, and the international community must ensure that human rights violations in Palestine and the occupied territories did not jeopardize the progress achieved thus far. It was essential to put an end to the deportations, unlawful arrests, ill-treatment,

(Mr. Cisse, Senegal)

administrative detention, destruction of homes and harassment of communities, which contravened the fourth Geneva Convention, and to endeavour to create a climate of confidence in the region. Senegal was relying on Israel to improve the human rights situation in the territories and agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee that the new situation required a complete review of the rules governing the use of firearms.

42. In order to promote peace and security in a region of such historical significance, the future Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority should be given support in the discharge of its new responsibilities, especially in the areas of economy, finance and health, with a view to reducing the violence and creating an atmosphere of hope and confidence among the Palestinian population. Senegal welcomed the decision by some countries to provide generous aid to the future Palestinian Government and urged other countries and international organizations to do likewise. Naturally, the parties concerned must continue to display political courage and good will in order to strengthen mutual confidence and sustain the dialogue that had been established.

43. Mr. ALRASSI (Saudi Arabia) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/48/557) highlighted the fact that Israel continued to employ repressive measures such as deportation, killings, land confiscation, the expansion of settlements, the control of natural resources, the imposition of collective punishment, the use of brutal force and the destruction of homes with anti-tank missiles for the acknowledged purpose of strengthening its control over the occupied territories and quelling any resistance on the part of the region's indigenous population. In the light of recent events, it was to be hoped that Israel would alter its policy and adopt a more constructive attitude. The signing of the Declaration of Principles with the PLO obliged Israel to change its position with regard to detainees and deportees. Official recognition of the PLO by Israel invalidated any accusations of complicity with that organization.

44. His delegation was disturbed by the recent ruling by the Supreme Court of Israel that the Al-Aqsa Mosque should be considered part of Israel and that maintenance work under way there should be subject to Israeli planning, construction and archaeological legislation; that ruling contravened United Nations resolutions on the status of Jerusalem and obstructed the peace process.

45. Saudi Arabia had declared its full support for the current peace process in the Middle East and had welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the PLO and Israel as a first step towards the liberation of Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon. It had also taken part in the recent donor meeting in Washington and had pledged $100 million for 1994.

46. A just peace was not possible without a permanent solution that guaranteed the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem. The importance of the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in that connection should not be underestimated. There was currently a ray of hope that the restoration of peace

(Mr. Alrassi, Saudi Arabia)

would make possible a dignified life for all, and that the region would become an oasis of prosperity and resume its role as a cradle of civilization.

47. Ms. FREIDRICH (Austria) said that the work of the Special Committee had been impeded over the past 25 years by Israel's refusal to grant access to the occupied territories. For many years Israel had been condemned for failing to recognize the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to those territories; concern had also been expressed at the imposition of Israeli laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Golan, the harassment of educational establishments and measures aimed at changing the legal status, geography and demographic composition of the territories, since the Committee was convinced that such actions posed an obstacle to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

48. On 13 September 1993, the world had Israel and the PLO shake hands to express mutual recognition, confirm their sincere wish to bring an end to decades of hostilities and injustices, and seal the promise of cooperation to achieve a just and lasting political solution to the question of Palestine based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

49. Austria urged Israelis and Palestinians to follow the example set by their respective leaders and, hand in hand, create the climate required for the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and to strive to live together in peace, dignity and security. Likewise, it welcomed the first steps taken by Israel in that direction and was confident that further genuine efforts, without any delay tactics, so as to meet the expectations of the international community and the population directly concerned.

50. Mr. RAHIM (Malaysia) said that his Government was greatly honoured that Malaysia had been appointed by the President of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; his delegation pledged its full support for and cooperation in the work of the Committee.

51. Malaysia had welcomed the recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization as well as the signing of the agreement on Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories, which had been viewed as a historic turning-point in the search for a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

52. His delegation hoped that that agreement would be the first step towards the building of mutual confidence that would allow the Palestinian people to enjoy its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, while ensuring the security of all States, including Israel.

53. The reports of the Special Committee and other independent observers showed that the human rights situation of the Palestinian people had remained unchanged during the period under review. The increasing number of Palestinians who had

(Mr. Rahim, Malaysia)

been killed or had suffered severe injuries as a result of the indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israeli security forces was a source of concern to Malaysia, but what was most disturbing was the growing number of casualties, including deaths, among defenceless students, women and children.

54. Another source of humanitarian concern was the increasing number of Palestinians who had been detained in the occupied territories and Israel. His country called upon Israel to speed up the judicial process of the several thousand who were being detained or imprisoned, ensuring that the several hundred who had been languishing in their cells for almost a year or two awaiting trial were given the right to a fair trial. His delegation had learned that more than 5,000 prisoners had staged a prolonged hunger strike in September 1992 to protest against deplorable prison conditions and to demand food, medical services, visiting rights, proper heating, less overcrowding in the prisons and information regarding penal procedures. His country also condemned the ill-treatment and inhuman torture inflicted during interrogations.

55. The Special Committee's reports reflected increasing violence and aggression that had aggravated the plight of the population. The imposition of curfews and the closing of territories had affected some 120,000 people, especially farmers who had been deprived of their livelihood and were unable to market their products. More than 25 per cent of the local student population had not been able to register for schools, universities and colleges outside their place of residence. Many believers had not been able to fulfil their religious obligations in either Muslim or Christian places of worship. Israel could not be allowed to pursue its deliberate policies of economic repression and harassment indefinitely. Malaysia likewise condemned other repressive measures which put considerable physical and psychological pressure on the Palestinian people, such as the collective punishment meted out by the Israeli army, which entailed destroying entire neighbourhoods with heavy artillery fire during searches for wanted individuals. It had also been observed that Israel continued to apply repressive measures and engage in harassment which obstructed the work of UNRWA and the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose personnel continued to do valuable work in assisting defenceless Palestinians.

56. His delegation agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee that the critical living conditions of Palestinians and other Arab peoples presented a threat to peace and stability in the region and to international security in general, and that it was necessary to convince Israel to put an end to its practices which affected the human rights situation in the region.

57. Israel had continued to try to quell the Palestinian uprising and had stepped up its inhuman policies and practices of repression, harassment and economic strangulation. Those illegal practices and inhuman acts constituted serious violations not only of Security Council resolutions but also of the fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant provisions of international law. The time had therefore come for the General Assembly and the Security Council to take concrete steps to improve the human rights situation in the occupied territories without further delay.

(Mr. Rahim, Malaysia)

58. His delegation was convinced that the Palestinian people would intensify its resistance if Israeli occupation and oppression continued. It would continue to support the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people in its quest for self-determination and the establishment of its own independent State.

59. Mr. Kalpage (Sri Lanka) resumed the Chair.

60. Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) said he believed that there was cause for optimism, since positive events had taken place after the period covered by the Special Committee's report (A/48/557), such as the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO and the signing of the Declaration of Principles. He hoped that those events would induce Israel to put an end to the practices listed in the Special Committee's reports.

61. The report for the current year recalled that the military occupation was in itself a serious violation of human rights in the occupied territories. Nevertheless it was conceivable that, once the accords were concluded, Israel might begin its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Jericho and the West Bank during a transition period which would culminate in its final withdrawal from those territories, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

62. He noted that, after the signing of the peace accords between Egypt and Israel, Egyptian sovereignty over the Sinai Peninsula had been re-established, and he was confident that once the Palestinian people enjoyed its legitimate rights, especially the right to self-determination, it would regain sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territories. He also hoped that similar progress would be made in the negotiations between the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel and that the two States might be at peace, but above all that Syria might recover its occupied territories and that there would be an end to the suffering of Syrian citizens in the Golan.

63. In the meantime, his delegation urged Israel to fulfil its obligations to the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories and to accept the de jure applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the Arab territories occupied since 1967. Israel must put an end to the repressive practices mentioned in the report of the Special Committee (A/48/557), including the annexation of land, acts of repression against the Arab citizens of the occupied territories, the detention of those citizens and the adoption of coercive measures against educational, social and economic institutions; above all, however, it must give up its determination to change the demographic characteristics of the occupied territories.

64. The Israeli and Palestinian sides had taken a big step towards peace through their mutual recognition and signing of the Declaration of Principles; however, they must continue working to achieve a final settlement of the conflict. Confidence-building measures would also be needed in order to overcome the psychological barrier created by many years of mutual animosity and

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

occupation practices. The Special Committee could make a positive contribution to the adoption of those measures.

65. Consideration of the question should take into account the positive developments which had occurred, and the resolutions drafted at the current session should reflect a new spirit of peace. However, the Committee's new report would reveal a new reality only if Israel adhered to international norms and accepted the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention.

66. The international community had a historic opportunity to transform the atmosphere of confrontation and hostility into a climate of cooperation in support of the peace process. Egypt hoped that all sides would cooperate in reviewing the problems of the Middle East region, bearing in mind the new situation.

67. Mr. GORDON (Israel) said that the report of the Special Committee was being discussed at the current session in a very different atmosphere than at the previous session because of the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Government of Israel and the PLO. That agreement, relating to the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, would provide a foundation for a settlement leading to peace between Israel and its neighbours and other countries of the region.

68. Among the political components of the Declaration of Principles (A/48/486), mention should be made of the negotiations for the establishment of a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the measures relating to the transitional period, the permanent status negotiations and the negotiations covering issues of common interest.

69. While the media had devoted broad coverage to the political aspects of the agreement, insufficient attention had been given to its economic components. However, it should be borne in mind that, while the political elements of the agreement would provide a framework within which Israelis and Palestinians could live in peace, the economic components would enable all the inhabitants of the region to lead more prosperous lives. Those elements were very important, because the religious fanatics who were committed to halting the peace process and destabilizing the region would find their support among the poor. Poverty and radicalism were the greatest enemies of peace.

70. As stated in article VI, paragraph 2, of the Declaration of Principles, immediately after the entry into force of the agreement, authority would be transferred to the Palestinians in the spheres of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism.

71. Two of the annexes to the Declaration of Principles were devoted to economic cooperation. Annex III dealt with cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians in the area of economic development programmes. Such cooperation would focus on the following: water, electricity, energy, finance, transport and communications, trade, industry, regulation of labour relations and cooperation in social welfare issues, human resources development and cooperation, environmental protection, communications and the media, and other

(Mr. Gordon, Israel)

areas of mutual interest. Annex IV provided for cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians in the area of regional development programmes. The parties had agreed to request the Group of Seven to seek the participation in such programmes, of other interested States, such as members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, regional Arab States and institutions, as well as members of the private sector. A development programme would have two elements: an economic development programme for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and a regional economic development programme. The first programme would consist of a social rehabilitation programme, a development plan for small and medium-sized enterprises, an infrastructure development programme, a human resources plan, and other programmes. The second programme might contain the following: the establishment of a Middle East development fund and a Middle East development bank; the development of a joint Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian plan for coordinated exploitation of the Dead Sea area; a canal between the Mediterranean Sea (Gaza Strip) and the Dead Sea; regional desalinization and other water development projects; a regional plan for agricultural development; the interconnection of electricity grids; regional cooperation for the transfer, distribution, and industrial development of gas, oil and other energy resources; a regional tourism, transportation and telecommunications development plan; and regional cooperation in other spheres.

72. Remarkable progress had been made, through the efforts of various multilateral and bilateral working groups, in transforming those plans into reality. Efforts were also under way world-wide to mobilize the huge amounts needed to finance those plans. At the donors' conference held in October in Washington, D.C., in which representatives of Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen and the PLO had participated, resources had been mobilized for economic and social development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Pledges amounting to $2 billion over five years had been made. The donors' financial support ensured that the agreement would rest firmly on a political component and a social and economic component.

73. Following the agreement reached between Israel and the PLO, developments in the Middle East were moving in a positive direction. The development of economic resources under the new Palestinian administration would require huge investments which would depend on concerted efforts by the international community. The United Nations should set an example of cost-effectiveness for potential investors and providers of assistance.

74. The Special Committee had been unnecessary and harmful from its inception. In the new political environment, its mandate should not be renewed, and its budget should be devoted to more fruitful ventures.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.